

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 9163

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, IS, SY

SUBJECT : SYRIA/ISRAEL: GROWING DIFFERENCES

REF: TEL AVIV 9098

1. WE FIND INTERESTING REPORTS APPEARING IN ISRAELI PRESS OVER WEEKEND INDICATING THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN MAKING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN SYRIAN TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND THAT RECENTLY OCCUPIED. ACCORDING TO PRESS, POPULATION IN MOST RECENTLY OCCUPIED TERRITORY, UNLIKE THAT IN GOLAN HEIGHTS, WILL CONTINUE TO USE SYRIAN CURRENCY, TO CARRY SYRIAN IDENTITY CARDS (ALTHOUGH TEMPORARY ISREALI IDENTITY CARDS WILL BE ISSUED) AND TO USE SYRIAN SYLLABUS IN THEIR SCHOOLS: SYRIAN POPULATION WILL REPORTEDLY BE ALLOWED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN NEWLY OCCUPIED TERRITORY BUT WILL NEED SPECIAL PERMIT BEFORE THEY CAN ENTER GOLAN HEIGHTS. OFFICIALLY, AREA WILL BE ADMINISTERED BY A MILITARY GOVERNOR AND ISRAELI CIVILIAN AGENCIES WILL ONLY BE ALLOWED TO ENTER AREA WITH HIS PERMISSION.

2. WE WOULD ASSUME THAT SYRIA IS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO MAKING SUCH DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND THAT OCCUPIED IN 1973. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AMONG CONDITIONS SYRIAN HAS BEEN INSISTING ISRAEL FULFILL BEFORE POW LISTS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO ICRC (REFTEL) WERE (A) RETURN OF SYRIAN CIVILIAN POPULATION, ESTIMATED TO BE AROUND 5,000, TO AREA OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL
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SINCE OUTBREAK OF WAR, AND (B) AN ISRAELI UNDERTAKING TO RESPECT FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION (RELATING TO PROTECTION OF CIVILIAN WAR VICTIMS) "IN ALL ITS PARTS."

3. IT APPEARS TO US THAT SYRIAN AIM MAY BE TO OBTAIN AN ISRAELI UNDERTAKING THAT ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS ARE NOT NECESSARILY A PERMANENT FIXTURE, THUS MAKING FUTURE STATUS OF GOLAN HEIGHTS REALISTICALLY NEGOTIABLE. WE NOTE THAT ARTICLE 49 OF FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION INTER ALIA STATES THAT OCCUPYING POWER SHALL NOT TRANSFER PARTS OF ITS OWN CIVILIAN POPULATION INTO TERRITORY IT OCCUPIES, AND PRESUMABLY THIS IS PROVISION SYRIANS HAVE IN MIND IN CALLING FOR ISRAELI ADHERENCE TO CONVENTION IN ALL ITS PARTS.

4. GIVEN LONGSTANDING ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS OF SYRIANS AS IMPLACABLE ENEMY, AND ALSO CONSIDERING SHOCK EFFECT ON ISRAELIS OF VERY CLOSE CALL IDF HAD IN PREVENTING SYRIAN BREAKTHROUGH INTO ISRAEL PROPER EARLY IN WAR, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT GOI HAS GIVEN ANY THOUGHT SO FAR TO FORMULATING NEGOTIATING POSITIONS FOR PURPOSES OF SEEKING OVERALL PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIA. MOVEOVER, GOI IN ITS TOTAL PRE-OCCUPATION WITH IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS AND ITS NEAR TOTAL FOCUS ON EGYPT RATHER THAN SYRIA MAY INADVERTENTLY GIVE DAMASCUS SIGNALS THAT IT IS NOT INTERESTED IN TRYING FOR SYRIAN-ISRAELI ACCOMMODATION. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WE SEE ANY IMMEDIATE SIGNS OF ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY RE FUTURE DISPOSITION OF GOLAN HEIGHTS. BUT IT IS TO SAY THAT CONSIDERED JUDGMENT OF GOI WOULD PROBABLY BE THAT SYRIANS SHOULD NOT BE TURNED OFF ALTOGETHER BY ISRAELI SIGNALS THAT APPEAR TO CONFIRM SARG'S WORST SUSPICIONS ABOUT ISRAELI ATTITUDES--IF ONLY BECAUSE OF SYRIA'S CAPABILITY FOR RUNNING SPOILING OPERATION AGAINST ANY PROSPECTIVE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ACCOMMODATION.

5. I WOULD APPRECIATE KNOWING IF DEPARTMENT READS SITUATION IN SAME WAY. IT MAY BE UNDERSTANDABLE THAT GOI WOULD PREFER TO NEGOTIATE ISSUES OF GOLAN HEIGHTS AND OF IDF OCCUPATION OF ADDITIONAL SYRIAN TERRITORY IN 1973 WAR SEPARATELY, BUT POSSIBLE EFFECT OF ISRAELI APPROACH ON OVERALL SARG ATTITUDE NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IF, AS PRESS IS NOW SAYING, PLANS ARE AFOOT TO TRY TO CONVENE MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE IN EARLY DECEMBER AT WHICH SYRIA WOULD BE
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PRESENT.
KEATING

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